

important improvements in their democratic processes; toleration of ethnic diversity; respect for human rights; building a free market economy; and promotion of good neighborly relations.

On February 18, 2008, the United States and many of our European allies diplomatically recognized the independence of Kosovo. This was an important step in putting the bloody history of the Balkans in the past, but our work there is not done. The United States and our allies must support the integration of Kosovo into international and Euro-Atlantic institutions. We must also be prepared to work closely with Serbia and assist with their goals of joining the European Union and engaging European institutions. In my view, lasting stability and security in southeastern Europe requires the military, economic, and political integration of emerging democracies into existing European structures.

Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia can play important roles in NATO efforts in Southeastern Europe. These three countries occupy critical geostrategic locations and are best situated to deter and disrupt any efforts by any party to destabilize the region through violence. NATO membership for these countries would be a success for Europe, NATO, and the United States by continuing to extend the zone of peace and security into a region that produced a world war and numerous regional conflicts that have cost the lives of hundreds of thousands, including Americans.

Bruce Jackson, president of the Project on Transitional Democracies, wrote in the Washington Post on February 4 that "the transatlantic allies face two critical questions when they gather for their summit in Bucharest in April. The first is whether to invite Albania, Croatia and Macedonia to join NATO, a decision that is the culmination of a 15-year effort to end the wars that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia." Mr. Jackson points out that "critics say that Albania, Croatia and Macedonia are not ready for NATO membership . . . But the fact is that Albania, Croatia and Macedonia have spent more than eight years in rigorous preparation for NATO membership."

Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia are not perfect, and there is more each of them needs to do economically and politically. Nevertheless, all three countries bring important backgrounds to the table: "Croatia has the most impressive economic performance, and real estate prices, of any country in southern Europe. In recent years, Albania has contributed more soldiers to missions in Iraq, Afghanistan and international peacekeeping than most NATO allies. And since the end of the Balkan wars in 1999, Macedonia has covered more ground in building an integrated, multi-ethnic society in a short time than any other European

nation. We now have a chance to bring Catholic Croatia, secular-Islamic Albania and multi-ethnic, Orthodox Macedonia into the Euro-Atlantic community of democracies. Not bad."

Mr. Jackson concludes by asking an important question. "Imagine if [the Alliance] had waited until Greece and Turkey had completed their internal debates before inviting them to join NATO. Any further delay on the candidacies of Albania, Croatia and Macedonia will diminish regional stability just as Kosovo begins its extended period of supervised independence, and will confuse and undercut the European Union as it takes over chief security responsibilities from the United States and NATO throughout the region. An inability to close this chapter in the Balkans would also dangerously slow our engagement with Europe's East."

Now is the time for NATO to invite these three important Balkan leaders to join the alliance. If NATO is to continue to be the preeminent security alliance and serve the defense interests of its membership, it must continue to evolve and that evolution must include enlargement. Potential NATO membership motivates emerging democracies to make important advances in areas such as the rule of law and civil society. A closer relationship with NATO will promote these values in Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia and contribute to our mutual security.

Five years ago, the U.S. Senate unanimously voted to invite seven countries to join NATO. Today, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia are making significant contributions to NATO and are among our closest allies in the global war on terrorism. It is time again for the United States to take the lead in urging its allies to bring in new members and to offer timely admission of Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia to NATO.

SENATE RESOLUTION 460—TO AUTHORIZE REPRESENTATION BY THE SENATE LEGAL COUNSEL IN THE CASE OF NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS V. TAYLOR, ET AL

Mr. REID (for himself and Mr. McCONNELL) submitted the following resolution; which was considered and agreed to:

S. RES. 460

Whereas, in the case of National Association of Manufacturers v. Taylor, et al., Case No. 08-CV-208-CKK (D.D.C.), pending in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, the plaintiff is asserting that the reporting requirements of section 4(b)(3) of the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995, 2 U.S.C. §1603(b)(3), as amended by section 207 of the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007, Pub. L. No. 110-81, 121 Stat. 735, 747, are unconstitutional;

Whereas, the plaintiff has named the Secretary of the Senate, Nancy Erickson, as a defendant in her capacity as the officer of the Senate responsible for the receipt of lobbying disclosure registrations and reports;

Whereas, pursuant to sections 703(a) and 704(a)(1) of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, 2 U.S.C. §§288b(a) and 288c(a)(1), the Senate may direct its counsel to defend officers of the Senate in civil actions relating to their official responsibilities: Now therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate Legal Counsel is authorized to represent the Secretary of the Senate in the case of National Association of Manufacturers v. Taylor, et al.

NOTICES OF HEARINGS

COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I would like to announce that the Committee on Indian Affairs will meet on Wednesday, February 27, at 9:30 a.m., in room 485 of the Russell Senate Office Building in order to conduct a hearing on S. 2232, the Foreign Aid Lessons for Domestic Economic Assistance Act of 2007.

Those wishing additional information may contact the Indian Affairs Committee at 224-2251.

COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I would like to inform Members that the Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship will hold a hearing entitled "The President's FY2009 Budget Request for the Small Business Administration," on Wednesday, February 27, 2008, at 10 a.m., in room 428A of the Russell Senate Office Building.

COMMITTEE ON RULES AND ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. FEINSTEIN. Mr. President, I wish to announce that the Committee on Rules and Administration will meet on Wednesday, February 27, 2008, at 10 a.m. to hear testimony on Protecting Voters at Home and at the Polls: Limiting Abusive Robocalls and Vote Caging Practices.

For further information regarding this hearing, please contact Howard Gantman at the Rules and Administration Committee, 224-6352.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. SMITH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that David Harrelson, an intern in my office and a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde in Oregon, be granted the privilege of the floor for the remainder of the debate on the Indian Health Care Improvement Act.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROVIDING FOR THE SAFE REDEPLOYMENT OF UNITED STATES TROOPS FROM IRAQ—MOTION TO PROCEED

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. Mr. President, pursuant to the order of February 14, I now move to proceed to Calendar No. 575, S. 2633, and I have a cloture motion at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented